

LIVES
OF
THE ENGLISH SAINTS.

St. Waltheof.

St. Robert.

MANSUETI HÆREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN
MULTITUDINE PACIS.

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LIVES OF

St. Waltheof

AND

St. Robert of Newminster.

INTRODUCTION.

It may have been observed that hitherto there have been comparatively few miracles in the Lives of Cistercian Saints. There even seems to be a dislike to looking out for miracles, as arguing a want of faith. Thus St. Aelred, in a passage already referred to, says, "There is also another sort of curiosity, which is the worst, by which, however, those alone are attacked who are conscious within themselves of great virtues, I mean the experimenting on one's own sanctity by the exhibition of miracles, which is tempting God. And if a man consent to this very wicked vice and is disappointed, his anguish of soul will lead him into the straits of despair, or the sacrilege of blasphemy."¹ Again, that is a significant story told of the successor of St. Bernard, at Clairvaux, that he begged of the saint to work no more miracles, as the concourse of people at his tomb distracted the devotion of the monks. In the two lives, however, which close the series of Cistercian Saints in England, there is a marked difference in this respect; both abound in that class of stories commonly called legends. Many of these are so well fitted to illustrate

¹ Spec. Car. 2. 24.

certain principles which should be borne in mind in considering medieval miracles, that they deserve some attention. Not that anything here said is intended to *prove* that the stories of miracles said to be wrought in the middle ages, are true. Men will always believe or disbelieve their truth, in proportion as they are disposed to admit or reject the antecedent probability of the existence of a perpetual church endowed with unfailing divine powers. And the reason of this is plain. Ecclesiastical miracles presuppose the Catholic faith just as Scripture miracles, and Scripture itself presuppose the existence of God. Men, therefore, who disbelieve the faith, will of course disbelieve the story of the miracles, which, if it is not appealed to as a proof of the faith, at least takes it for granted. For instance, the real reason for rejecting the account of the vision which appeared to St. Waltheof in the Holy Eucharist, must be disbelief of the Catholic doctrine. Without, however, entering on so wide a subject, it will be enough to examine, as it were, the phenomena of the miracles themselves, and to see what can be made out as to their probable truth or falsehood.

First, then, no one can read the legends of the middle ages without observing their highly poetical character. They form in themselves a vast literature of every country in Europe, many of them containing the only contemporary history of the period at which they were written, and many having a beauty and a freshness, which has been observed by many who disbelieved them. Besides which, they are the exponents of a well-defined idea, and are formed on a religious type which is clear enough to those who talk most loudly against them. The notion of a saint which they embody is a very definite one, and the writers evidently know what they are

talking about. It seems most unphilosophical to suppose that such writers were men who knowingly wrote to deceive ; the vast volumes of the Bollandists, illustrated as they are with such astonishing historical and antiquarian learning, would be most extraordinary compositions if this were the case. And, in fact, there are now comparatively few who take this view of the legends of saints. They are generally now opposed on the ground of their poetical character, and not as being intentional fabrications. In fact, the two objections are incompatible ; no one would dream of calling a poet dishonest, because his narrative is fictitious. If he believes the stories on which he writes, he may be called superstitious, but that is a very different indictment. To call a tale poetical is, however, by no means to say that it is true ; on the contrary, this is the very ground on which legends are commonly said to be false. They are thought to be the natural product of the Christian religion acting upon the vigorous imagination of a youthful people ; they are the offspring of the human mind in one stage of its progress, and they come out of it as the acorn out of the oak, and the flower out of the plant. In other words, legends of saints are the creations of the mind of man in the same sense as the Hindoo or Greek mythology ; Christianity, indeed, being a purer religion, has substituted some holy virgin as a guardian for the sacred well, instead of the Grecian Naid, but one being is as much a fiction as the other. And the legends themselves are a proof of this ; they are observed to vary in character according to the country which gave them birth. The legends of the sandy Thebais, with their repose and Eastern gravity, contrast strongly with the wild stories of western hermits, which are the genuine products of the forest and the cavern by the sea shore. Celtic legends also have a

savage air peculiar to themselves, with their tales of serpents and monsters, reminding the reader strongly that St. Michael has just succeeded to the holy isles of the Druids ; while Saxon stories are of a homely and domestic cast. All these legends, the argument proceeds, show their peculiar origin by their variety, just as the nature of the soil is betrayed by the plants which grow upon it. These legends, therefore, are of the earth, and we need rise no higher for their origin. Secondly, to bring the matter nearer to our subject, not only do these considerations account for the existence of legendary literature, but they account for visions and prodigies of all sorts. The same love of the marvellous which produces fairy tales and ghost stories, will also make the peasant fancy that he sees the elves dancing by moonlight on the mountain-side ; and by the same law of our minds, the vivid imagination of a good man, acted upon by his devotion, might produce on his mind a strong impression which might take the shape of a vision. In the case of St. Waltheof, for instance, it may be observed that the visions which he saw occurred always on the feast-days and holy times of the church. Now it may be that a highwrought state of mind, worked upon by long and exciting services, produced the vision, as the events of a day produce a dream.

This is the way in which men argue, and it is not necessary just now to inquire how far the fact on which the argument is grounded, is true. Few would doubt that many legends of the lives of Saints are strongly tinged by popular devotion, or it may be by superstition. How, indeed, could it be otherwise ? When it is known that many islands on the savage coast of Brittany, for instance, were in a half heathen state, and required missionaries in the seventeenth century, can

they be supposed to have been less benighted in the tenth? It may, therefore, very safely be allowed that many legends of the middle ages are but a reflection of the truth rather than the truth itself. Some of them are mere myths, and belong to the same class as the beautiful stories of the Saintgrail, and of king Authur's knights. And indeed this is the way in which most authors now regard them. The Bollandists are by no means sparing of such epithets as *ineptæ* and *ridiculæ*, applied to many legends which they have published. Time has gone on, and in its course men are altered too; and they can no longer receive indiscriminately what the faith of their ancestors fed upon. We must be men, it is said, and criticism and historic truth must take the place of simple belief.

This is not, however, what we would now dwell upon: our present object is rather to point out that with all the drawbacks that are to be made on the score of the superstition pervading a portion of ancient lives of Saints, the argument drawn out above does not cut the ground from under medieval miracles and visions in general, as it pretends to do. It is quite true that stories of miracles partake of the character of an imaginative age, and are tinged by the character of particular nations, yet this is no reason for supposing them to be untrue, for individuals partake of the tone of the age and country in which they live, and it is out of the characters of His saints that God produces the wonders which He operates in His church. The human side of events is by no means incompatible with the divine. The inspiration which puts into the heart of a Saint to work a miracle, by no means excludes his will and his temper; his angelic charity is employed in healing the sick miraculously, as in dressing their wounds or in

soothing their sorrows. The undaunted energy, and even the roughness and quaintness of his character, may come out in the midst of the supernatural power imparted to him.

And with respect to visions in particular, there seems no reason why the devotion of a saint should not in a certain sense produce a vision, just as grace implies our habits, and predestination our efforts. And yet, though the intense contemplation of one who is pure in heart may pierce through the veil and see the saints and angels before the throne, this does not exclude the agency of God, whose workmanship we are, though we work out our own salvation. It is a wide-spread error by which men suppose that when they have classified all that they know of a subject, they have got to the bottom of the whole matter, and have a right to exclude whatever does not necessarily come within their system, even though it may not be incompatible with it. They think that they have discovered all that is to be known, when they have but found out the formal cause, that is, when they have analyzed their own idea, forgetting that the real cause still remains as far off from them as ever. Some philosophers have argued, that because the idea of God in the human mind is the creation of the soul of man, imagining to itself the supreme good, therefore God Himself is nothing more than the ideal standard of good dwelling naturally within us. But such men forget that, although the thought of God may come into the heart of man by a natural process, this is not incompatible with the fact of His existence as our Everlasting Creator and Master. And in like manner visions might be real, that is come from God, though they were ever so much the effect of the intense devotion of the Saint.

And to carry these remarks further, in matters

of physical science it is often said that men now-a-days have no superstitious views of such phenomena as earthquakes, eclipses, and thunder, because their causes have been discovered. Now it may or may not be superstitious to be afraid of thunder, but to say that it is caused by electricity removes none of those reasons for fear which affected men in the dark ages. What is meant by a law is only the human way of viewing in succession, what to Almighty God, and it may be even to the angels, is one and undivided. So it is quite true that "the glorious God maketh the thunder," though it is also true that electricity is the cause of it, and that it proceeds on a natural law. So also the dark ages might be right in ascribing certain extraordinary events to divine agency, even though men had discovered, which they have not, the psychological law on which such effects are produced. They might be connected with the imaginativeness of the human heart, for imagination raised by Christianity above its natural powers becomes intense devotion.

To go to another branch of the same subject, it is often said that what was called diabolical possession was only a natural disease called epilepsy, and therefore had nothing to do with devils. But evil spirits might have power over the body, and might always act in a particular way, so as to constitute a law. Or else they might bring to pass, in a supernatural way, effects which also happen from natural causes, so that exorcism may be a supernatural power, even though natural means can in time remove what may be done miraculously in an instant. Again, in the present day, strange effects of mind over matter have been discovered, and in some cases mesmerism seems to make an approach to what would formerly have been ascribed

and rightly to supernatural causes. But this, so far from telling against medieval miracles, only proves that human souls and bodies possess mysterious powers on which the Holy Spirit may have deigned to work, and that things are possible which men have long denied on the score of their impossibility. Nay, supposing that Satan could thus in certain false systems of religion imitate some Christian miracles by signs and wonders, it would throw no discredit upon them. Natural philosophers have been said to draw down lightning from heaven and to make diamonds, but they do not make the slightest approach to the power of God, nor bridge over the infinite gulf which divides causation from creation.

It appears, then, that to talk of the power of imagination is nothing to the purpose, if it is meant to show that such visions as those with which St. Waltheof was favoured did not really come from heaven. Imagination, translated into the language of the Church, means devotion ; and no one can tell how far Almighty God may have made use of the Saint's own devotion in framing the vision before the eyes of his soul. And what has been said on similar subjects by great writers in the Church falls in with this notion of the influence of the soul in such matters. St. Augustine discusses whether the cloven tongues of fire, seen on the first Whitsunday, were seen in the spirit within, as though they were without, or really without before the eyes of the flesh. In another place, he touches upon "the power of the soul in changing and influencing bodily matter,"² though, at the same time, he says, that it cannot be called the creator of the body, who is God alone. So also St. Thomas discusses the very case

² St. Aug. de Trin. 3. 8.

which, as will be seen, happened to St. Waltheof, of a child appearing at the time of the elevation of the Host. He thus determines that what was there seen was not the body of our Lord, but that an effect was produced upon the eyes of the Saint, "as though it were seen externally." "And yet," he continues, "this had nothing to do with deception, as in the case of magic charms, for such an appearance is formed by divine influence on the eye to figure a truth—viz., to show that the body of the Lord is really under the Sacrament; as also Christ, without deception, appeared to the disciples going to Emmaus."³ Again, in an instance which brings us close to St. Robert of Newminster, St. Godric, who does not at first seem likely to reason on what he saw, is recorded to have said, after seeing a vision of a departed soul, that he saw not the soul itself, for it was invisible, but that what he saw was a form which signified its presence.

And if it be asked, why should these visions be real, and alleged appearances of false gods and of beings created by superstition be untrue?—the answer is, that, as has been said before, the visions in the lives of Saints presuppose the truth of the Catholic faith, and are real because the faith is true. We believe Christian visions to be real because Christianity is real, and the portents of heathen mythology are false because they are part of a false religion. And here, as in many other respects, the analogy between the natural and the spiritual sight is perfect; for all our senses, and sight among the rest, require it to be taken for granted that the sensations which we feel are produced by an object without us; and philosophers have been found who reason very plausibly, that all that we see and touch is merely our-

³ Summa Theol. 3. qu. 76, 8.

selves touching and feeling, just as faithless men argue that the visions of the Saints are mere creations of their own minds. Substance is taken for granted in our bodily vision, as the faith is presupposed in supernatural visions.

And in distinguishing what are most commonly called legends from what is historical in the lives of Saints, it should be borne in mind, that though the prevalence of a certain tone, which may be called poetical or romantic, does not throw discredit on miracles in general; yet it is quite true that, in many particular instances, the strange stories in medieval narratives are strongly tinged by the spirit of the age, call it poetic, superstitious, or faithful, as you will. The proof of it is, that a love of the marvellous evidently affects the narratives of historians as well as hagiologists; and this both makes it likely that the same tone should appear in accounts of what is confessedly supernatural, and also shows that truth and falsehood may be blended together without destroying each other. In the grave chronicles of the age, most of them proceeding from the lonely cell of some religious man, accounts of marvellous portents, of bright colours and strange figures seen in the sun and moon, are mingled with just as much of the news of the outer world, of the victories and defeats of kings, as was drifted into the monastery. If it were not for the undeniably life-like energy of the barons and kings who make their appearance, the reader would be tempted to put down the whole for a production of the vivid fancy of some solitary monk, so much does the whole scene savour of the romantic. Sometimes the list of portents reminds us of the marvels which appear in the pages of Livy. Even the shrewd William of Newbridge, though by no means

without his tinge of private judgment, is overcome by his love of the marvellous, and some accounts very like fairy tales appear in the midst of his facts. As a specimen of his narrations, in one place, among many other marvels, it is said that near Winchester some quarrymen found embedded in stone a live toad, with a gold chain and collar round his neck. In the same way, at a time when men were not given to patient investigation on any point, it is not wonderful that the lives of Saints should present manifold exaggerations, and that the convent traditions should in some cases grow, like any other narratives. The objections commonly urged that man is liable to error, and that inspiration alone is infallible, are in place here, however senseless they may be when they would sap the foundations of all history, by rejecting any amount of evidence. There is a good substratum of truth in the medieval lives of Saints, which will stand the attack of any philosophy which would reduce them to the state of myths ; while at the same time the busy, romantic element of the human heart has naturally exercised itself on Christian Saints as it did on the champions of Christendom in the Holy Land. Evidence, internal and external, must be the criterion here, as in every other kind of history.

These remarks are the more apposite, because there are instances in Josceline's life of St. Waltheof which will illustrate what is meant. One of them is as follows: on a certain day, when one of the canons of Kirkham was celebrating mass in the presence of St. Waltheof, a spider fell into the sacred chalice about the time that the words *Agnus Dei* are sung ; the celebrant, not knowing what to do, managed to attract St. Waltheof's attention, and asked him what course ought to be taken. He could not drink the contents of the chalice, because the

spider was a poisonous insect, and he could not take it out for fear of profanation. St. Waltheof, making a short prayer and signing the chalice with the cross, bade the canon boldly drink, in the Lord's name. Then Josceline, after detailing his admiration that the canon received no hurt, goes on to say : " When dinner was over and the canons were sitting in the cloister, the priest who had celebrated mass sat rubbing his finger, and after a short time a lump appeared on it, and lo ! the spider, breaking the skin, came out alive, to the wonder of all who were sitting round, and by the command of the prior was committed to the flames." Now there is no reason to doubt that the spider did fall into the chalice, and that the canon felt the difficulty and drank its contents, for spiders were then believed to be poisonous, As for the story of the reappearance of the insect, as the whole goes on the assumption that spiders are poisonous and that there was a miracle in the case, it may fairly be concluded to be an excrescence on the original story, and that it had been appended to it in conventual tradition, just as any other narrative "*vires acquirit eundo.*" It, however, no more implies fraud, than the addition of this gold chain and collar to the neck of the unfortunate toad, which, doubtless, was found in the quarry near Winchester. Many more instances might be taken from this source, but enough has been said to show how truth and fiction may lie together, blended in the same narrative. If it be impossible to separate them, that is a reason either for neglecting the whole, or for receiving the whole. Religious minds would probably take the latter alternative, not thinking it after all so very great a misfortune to believe a few miracles too much. They would rather venture a little than lose one record of God's dealings with his Saints. However, we do not believe it to

be in all cases impossible to make the separation. In the present instance, some attempt has been made to do so. Josceline, the monk of Furness, who is the author of the life in the Bollandists, wrote about sixty years after the death of St. Waltheof. He professes to draw his narrative from some aged monks of the abbey of Melrose. It seemed therefore lawful to give as much of his narrative as would be interesting, without relating every circumstance, which it contains.⁴

In conclusion, it will be well to see in what light such visions and miracles as are here related are considered by spiritual writers in the Catholic Church, that it may be seen how far they are from laying stress upon them, though they will not faithlessly set limits to God's grace in His dealings with His saints. "There are some," says an author whom most men would call foolishly credulous,⁵ "whom the devil deceives; but there are others, too, who are deceived by the weakness of their imagination, fancying that they see and hear extraordinary objects and voices, though in effect they see and hear nothing. There are some also who not only are deceived by the devil, or by themselves, but seek to deceive others by voluntary and diabolical wickedness. So we repeat what we have said; we must be on our guard, not easily to put faith in extraordinary things. Spiritual directors should take care to guide souls put under them in the ways of pure faith, which is the immediate union of the soul with God. This is the

⁴ The precise date of his work cannot now be easily ascertained. It appears that he began it at the request of Patrick, Abbot of Melrose, and finished it after his death. Patrick succeeded William as Abbot in 1206, and died the year after. Josceline, therefore, probably finished his work shortly after 1207.

⁵ Boudon, *L'Amour de Dieu seul*; discours préliminaire.

teaching of the great doctor of mystical theology, the blessed John of the Cross ; he gives it as a rule in his books, that such things as visions and revelations should be left to the judgment of God, and that we should remain in quiet faith, without dwelling upon them. This teaching shields us from all illusions of the devil ; for by resting in pure faith, a man cannot err. He walks by a sure path, and the light which guides him is infallible ; besides which, since these unmerited graces which God gives us, such as visions and revelations, come externally to us, and are independent of us, we therefore are safe in not examining them. I do not mean that directors should not make use of such marks as holy doctors have given us to discern the true Spirit of God in such extraordinary things from the evil spirit ; but I mean that, after all, we must suspend our judgment, and lay no great stress on such things, and lean entirely on faith. With respect to those persons who are the subjects of such extraordinary occurrences, they should not let their minds dwell upon them at all, but leave them to the judgment of God, whatever value they may have in His sight. Thus, if they are the work of the devil, he will be confounded ; if they come from the Holy Spirit, He will increase His blessings."

LIFE OF

St. Waltheof.

THE lives of the Saints of the middle ages are like the ruins of their own monasteries, lovely and melancholy fragments, which are but indications of a beauty which has passed away from the earth. Not indeed as though the Church were dead, and there were no Saints now in Christendom, but a Saint of the nineteenth century will never be precisely like one of the twelfth. The beautiful infancy and youth of Christianity are past, and even Saints may partake something of the acuteness and activity of the age with which they have to contend. If Melrose could be roofed afresh, and the vaulted ceiling restored, the painted glass replaced in the east oriel, and the niches filled again, it would certainly not be a facsimile of the Melrose of six hundred years ago. But the building would not be so unlike its predecessor as the new members would differ from their brethren of old, though they wore the same habit and kept the same rule. But it is wrong to mourn over what must be; and perhaps the new brethren would in some respects surpass the old. So we must just take Melrose as it is, a beautiful ruin; and we will try to write the life of its holy Abbot Waltheof, imperfect as the attempt must be. We will do our best to put into shape the scanty records left by brother Josceline, just as a man standing on the Eildon hill on an autumn evening would fill up the outline formed against the glowing sky by the ruined abbey.

How Waltheof lived in the World.

There are some persons who, from their birth, appear destined to take part in the roughest scenes of the world's politics, and to this class Waltheof seemed to belong. He was apparently born to inherit the strongest prejudices, and to be placed amidst conflicting interests, in which he was unavoidably to take his part. He was of one of the most illustrious families of England, descended from the old kings and earls of Northumbria, from Ida, the bearer of flame, and from Siward, who had defeated the tyrant Macbeth, and set Malcolm Canmore on the throne. His grandfather, whose name he bore, was that Waltheof whom the Conqueror had first, as he thought, won to himself, by bestowing on him the hand of his niece Judith, but whom he had afterwards ruthlessly beheaded at Winchester. His body was taken to the Abbey of Croyland, where the affectionate remembrance of the poor Saxon canonized the victim of the Conqueror's revenge, and pilgrims often knelt at the tomb of the English martyr. The daughter of this Waltheof, Matilda, was given in marriage to Simon of St. Liz, a Norman noble, as if to obliterate the remembrance of her Saxon blood; and of this union were born two children, Simon and Waltheof. Not long after their birth, their father incurred the displeasure of Henry I., and he assumed the cross and went to the Holy Land. He left England, never to return; news soon came to his wife that she was a widow, for her husband had perished as a good soldier of the Cross in Palestine. Matilda was still young when this happened, and her cousin, king Henry, afterwards gave her in marriage to David of Scotland, and with her bestowed on him the possessions of her first husband. When

David inherited the throne of Scotland, his step-sons followed him, and were brought up in the palace of Dumfermline with his own children.

The course of Waltheof's life seemed thus to be marked out for him : he was to be a staunch defender of the Saxon line, and a hater of the Normans, who had slain his grandfather and caused the exile of his father ; and he was to be a staunch partisan of the succession of the empress Matilda. But there are men who apparently come across their destiny—some for good, and others for bad—and of these was Waltheof. It was evident, however, from his infancy, that he was not made for the world which was moving around him. Their mother, Matilda, used to smile at the contrast between her two boys, when they were mere children, playing at her feet. While Simon, the elder, the future earl and warrior, was building castles of wood and charging, at a mock tournament, astride on a cane, Waltheof would be raising churches of sticks and pebbles, making the sign of the Cross like a priest, and imitating the chants which he had heard in church. As he advanced in years he seemed hardly to change, so naturally and evenly did his character grow in strength and beauty, without losing its childlike freshness. It was as, says the Scripture, the righteous man blossoming as the lily. When he came to David's court, he showed the same purity and the same unearthly character ; and so little did he seem to belong to the scenes which were passing about him, that the nobles of Scotland did not know what to make of him ; and he puzzled them the more, from the striking difference between him and his two companions, Prince Henry and Aelred. The high-spirited Henry was an indefatigable hunter, and marked out for a soldier from his birth ; and even Aelred, who

from his bookish propensities might be classified with Waltheof, still showed some marked differences from his friend : he was more easily understood, from his frank and sociable temper. But Waltheof, without any appearance of moroseness, was fond of solitude ; he had but few friends, while Aelred had many. Again, Aelred was very cheerful, and took interest in all about him ; but Waltheof might have seemed apathetic. Though none could look on his bright countenance and think him gloomy, yet it was evident that the scenes which passed around him affected him but little : he was an unworldly character, and such always are incomprehensible to men of the world. King David alone saw through his step-son ; he used to take Waltheof with him into the noble forests which surrounded Dumfermline to hunt the wild deer ; and would give him his bow to carry, in order to keep him near himself. But the young lord soon grew weary of the chase, and giving up the care of the king's bow to some one else, he used to plunge deep into the woods ; and finding a level spot of green sward under the shade of some broad oak, he would read a book or kneel down to pray. One day David, who used to wonder at his periodical disappearance, came upon him in his retirement, and though the whole chase swept rapidly past him, David's quick eye had time to spy him out in his hiding place ; and when he came home, he said to his queen, " That son of thine is not of our stamp ; he is nothing to the world, nor the world to him ; depend upon it, he will either die young, or else fly away to the cloister."

The nobles about the court, however, did not take this view, and Waltheof still remained a mystery to them. They even made experiments upon him, as philosophers

would on some strange phenomenon. As far as they durst, by covert insinuations, they put evil before him, but his imperturbable simplicity baffled them. Waltheof probably did not know himself any more than they. It often happens that those whom God is leading on to perfection, are unconscious of the end to which they are tending. Those about them often think them incapable of anything very great, and they themselves have often not made up their mind what course of life is to be theirs. The notion of choice does not come before them, till something external forces them to election, and they choose at once the better part. So in the case of Waltheof, an event occurred which opened the eyes of all parties, both his own and those of the nobles, who were looking on to see how this would end. A young and noble lady fell in love with Waltheof, and the courtiers used with delight to watch them speaking together, hoping that at last the lord Waltheof was becoming like his neighbours, and was human after all. Soon after, some one spied glittering on Waltheof's finger a gold ring with a sparkling gem, which the lady had given him. The news soon spread that he was in a fair way of being a confessed lover; there was joy in the gay circles of the court that day, for they thought that Waltheof had fallen from his high estate, and had thus become like an ordinary mortal. They were however mistaken, for when this report reached him, it opened his eyes at once to his situation. He must either make up his mind to marry or to go into religion. The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light, and they taught Waltheof a lesson, that such attachments are dangerous. There can be no half measures, and the crucifixion must be complete.

So Waltheof took the shining jewel off his finger and threw it into the fire. From that moment, he looked upon himself as destined for the priesthood.

2. How Waltheof quitted the World.

He was now considered as certain of a bishoprick either in England or Scotland; and when the king of Scotland was his step-father, and the king of England his mother's cousin, it was no unreasonable conjecture. Waltheof, had, however, by no means the same views for himself; his only wish was to serve God in the lowest station in his church. While he was revolving these thoughts in his mind, Aelred announced his intention of becoming a monk and of quitting Scotland. It seemed much less likely that the gay and open-hearted Aelred should be the first to go, but so it was;⁶ and Waltheof must have felt very solitary, when the only friend who understood his feelings and character had gone into religion and had left him in the world. He was not one who could make new friends in a day, and he had still some time to remain in solitude after Aelred had left him. He found more external obstacles than Aelred had met with, in his way from the world to the cloister. He was an important political personage; and in times when the north of England was a debateable ground, it was of the utmost consequence to put the great sees into the hands of friendly churchmen, as not long after Henry II. saw when he created the bishoprick of Carlisle to counteract the see of Glasgow. Waltheof,

⁶ Waltheof did not leave Scotland till his brother was an earl, *i. e.* probably not till Stephen's reign.

as David's step-son, would have been a more respectable personage to fill St. Cuthbert's chair than William Comyn, who was put in by Matilda's party. He was not therefore his own master. His brother Simon, too, whose warlike propensities made him look upon his brother's love for the cloister as fanaticism, had early in Stephen's reign become earl of Northampton;⁷ and he as well as king David opposed Waltheof's wish. At length he stole away from David's court, and took refuge in Yorkshire, at a priory of Austin canons, dedicated to St. Oswald, one of the ancestors of his family. Here Waltheof hoped that the world would forget him. "Here," says brother Josceline, "he determined to lie hid and die, as, says the blessed Job, in his little nest; and to grow up noiselessly as a palm-tree, hidden from the provoking of all men in the secret place of God's countenance, forgotten by all his kith and kin, like a useless vessel flung aside, like a dead man in the hearts of his friends." Such was Waltheof's wish. "But the Lord of all," continues Josceline, "had decreed far otherwise." First of all, he was made sacristan of St. Oswald's, and then the canons of Kirkham chose him for their prior. And here at last he seemed to have obtained the rest for which his soul longed; and indeed many men might envy him the place in which his lot was cast. It was in a beautiful valley in Yorkshire, not far from the spot where the waters of the Rye, after passing under the walls of the abbey of Rievaulx, joined the broader stream of the Derwent. He was therefore now a near neighbour to Aelred; the abbey and the priory had a common founder, and their posses-

⁷ v. Knyghton ap. Twysden, 2386, and Brompton, 1030. Brompton says, earl of Huntingdon, p. 975, which he was not till afterwards, as appears from John of Hexham, p. 258.

sions touched each other, and the monks had frequent intercourse with the canons. Among their visitors at some time or other was certainly Aelred, for he mentions Kirkham, and calls it a most lovely spot. His friends in Scotland evidently bore no ill-will to him for his flight from them, for his half-brother, prince Henry, loved Kirkham for its prior's sake, and bestowed many lands upon it. His canons too loved Waltheof for all his virtues, but specially for his humility ; for he did not rule over them with a high hand, but treated them as brethren.

He might have quitted them, if he had pleased, for a much higher station. In 1140, Thurstan, archbishop of York, died, and there were great deliberations in the court of Westminster. The question was, who would make a respectable archbishop, and at the same time a good partisan of king Stephen. From Waltheof's noble birth and reputation for sanctity, he would have been an obvious person to fix upon ; and though, from his connection with king David, he was not at first sight likely to fulfil Stephen's conditions, yet it seems that his brother Simon had taken the side of the king against Matilda, so that there were hopes that he might follow his example. Many nobles urged Stephen to appoint him, but the king was afraid of him. With all Waltheof's sweetness and humility, there was a certain unmanageable element in his character which did not suit Stephen. It is a dangerous experiment to place on an episcopal throne a man who could neither be bribed nor frightened. In fact, what could Waltheof be bribed with ? He had already given up everything on earth. He had no earthly wishes ; so what could be done with such a man ? Again, if he did wish for anything, it was to suffer humiliation with his Lord ; force, therefore, would have been equally unavailing. So,

on the whole, king Stephen thought that Waltheof was not the man to be archbishop of York. All this while the prior of Kirkham was very quietly in the wilds of Yorkshire, utterly ignorant that he was the subject of grave deliberation in high places, till one day he received intimation that the puissant earl of Albemarle⁸ had arrived at Kirkham, and wished to see him. After some conversation, the noble earl said, "How long dost thou mean to bring dishonour on our house, by burying thyself in this dungeon of a cloister? Why not show thyself in public oftener? If thou wouldest but take the trouble to gain the favour of the king and his counsellors by gifts and promises, thou wouldest win any bishoprick thou mightest affect. If thou wilt but promise to give me the township of Shirburn, to be held by me during my lifetime, I will undertake to get thee the archbishoprick of York." His lordship of Albemarle certainly knew very little with what sort of man he had to deal; he was therefore, probably, not a little surprised to see the pale cheek of the gentle monk suffused with red, and his eye kindle for a moment with something like anger. It however passed away as quickly as it came; and Waltheof calmly said, "Be thou quite sure that thou wilt never see me seated in a bishop's throne, nor thyself in possession of the township of Shirburn."

It was not, however, surprising that a worldly-minded man, like the earl, should not be able to penetrate the depth of Waltheof's character. It would have been a hard matter for any one who saw the lowly prior

⁸ William, this earl of Albemarle, was son of Stephen, who was the brother of Judith, St. Waltheof's grandmother. Stephen and Judith were the children of Odo, earl of Albemarle, by Adeliza, sister of the Conqueror. William was first cousin to St. Waltheof's mother.

abasing himself beneath the lowest lay-brother of the community, to tell how highly favoured was this humble soul. It would have been difficult to suppose that this humble man, who busied himself so noiselessly and regularly with the rule of his convent, and threw his mind into all the wants and desires of his brethren, was all the while wrapt up in the contemplation of heavenly things, in a way in which none but those who are dead to earth can know. Sometimes our blessed Lord would, as it were, break through the cloud; and as after His resurrection He would appear suddenly in the midst of His disciples, so now and then in Waltheof's life, He all at once converted contemplation into vision, and gave His servant sensible indications of His presence. One of these visions appears to have occurred at Kirkham. One Christmas-day, while the convent was celebrating the Nativity of the Lord, as the Prior was elevating the Host, in the blessed sacrifice of the mass, he saw in his hands a child fairer than the children of men, having on his head a crown of gold, studded with jewels. His eyes beamed with light, and his face was more radiant than the whitest snow; and so ineffably sweet was his countenance, that the prior kissed the feet and the hands of the heavenly child. After this the divine vision disappeared, and Waltheof found in his hands the consecrated wafer.

The servants of Christ are, however, never suffered by Him to dwell on the joys which He vouchsafes to give them. When the Apostles were, after our Lord's ascension, straining their eyes to penetrate the cloud which carried Him out of their sight, two angels appeared, to ask them why they stood gazing up into heaven. So the vision which Waltheof saw was but for a moment, or rather it hardly could be measured by time at all; and

when it disappeared, and he came down from the altar and went back into the monastery to set about his business, all looked as it did before. The cloisters echoed to his footsteps as if nothing had happened, and the canons, bowing in silence to their prior as they passed him, reminded him that he must go on with his work. And sad work he soon had upon his hands ; that same archbishoprick of York which he had rejected was now a bone of contention in the north ; and news arrived at Kirkham that William, the treasurer, Stephen's nephew, had been elected, but that the presence of the earl of York at the election made men suspect that undue influence had been exerted, if not by William, at least by his friends. William's character was not such as to please Waltheof's Cistercian friends ; he was amiable indeed, and none accused him of immorality ; but he was at that time indolent and magnificent. They were unsparing in their censures, these Cistercian monks ; popes, cardinals, and bishops equally came under their lash, and in this case they determined to oppose William's election as being uncanonical. Waltheof was already a Cistercian in heart, and he joined himself to his neighbours, William, abbot of Rievaulx, and Richard, abbot of Fountains, in their efforts to obtain a sentence against the election. The parties in opposition to each other in the diocese of York were, on the whole, regulars against seculars, that is, at least in this case, strictness against laxity ; and Waltheof did not hesitate which side to choose. In 1142 he appealed against the election with the abbots of Fountains and of Rievaulx, and others of the regular as well as some of the cathedral clergy. In 1144 we find him at Rome with his colleagues in the appeal. No particulars appear of his journey across the Alps ; but doubtless the tombs of the Apostles saw more of Waltheof than the papal

court. How they sped in their cause has been too well narrated elsewhere to require notice in this place ; besides which, it has little to do with Waltheof's history. He brought back to Kirkham a heart not a whit more in love with the great world on account of the glimpse which he had seen of it. All that he had seen on his way to and from the great city remained on his mind like a bewildered dream ; and neither the snowy Alps, nor the blue lakes and sunny sky of Italy, seemed to him half so beautiful as the rugged outline of the Blackmoor hills, and the first sight of the green banks of the winding Derwent and the tower of his own church at Kirkham, from which the bells were ringing to welcome his arrival ; and the brethren issuing out of the church with cross and banner to meet their prior.

3. *How Waltheof became a Monk.*

The poor brethren of Kirkham were, however, soon to lose him. Was it restlessness, this desire of quitting his station at Kirkham that arose within him, or was it a longing for obedience, and for giving up his will to that of a superior ? A great struggle went on in his heart ; for, says brother Josceline, " There increased every day in his heart the hatred of worldly pomp and the desire of his heavenly country, and he was bent on embracing a stricter order. Such was the continued wish of his heart ; but he still pondered over it, weighing with discretion the arguments for and against it. He desired instead of a canon to become a monk, and above all a monk of the Cistercian order, which seemed to him stricter and more austere than that of the canons of St. Austin. Still, as he used to tell of himself, he feared

lest his weakness should sink under such a burden. He often prayed to the Angel of great counsel that He would illumine and strengthen his spirit with the Spirit of counsel and of might, that he might choose with wise counsel, and hold fast with might whatever was best for the health of his soul. He feared lest perchance an angel of Satan, who often transforms himself into an angel of light, should be giving him poison to drink out of a golden cup. As, however, after patient waiting and long trial, his heart continued still firm and unmoved as a pillar; he felt that the Lord had visited him, and had drawn him on to conceive this design in his heart." He would not, however, trust his own view of the case, and so he bethought himself of an old friend of his, whom he was now to meet in a new capacity. William, his companion in his journey to Rome, had died, and Aelred, his playmate and the friend of his youth in the court of Scotland, had succeeded as Abbot. So Waltheof went along the banks of the Derwent, then up the beautiful valley of the Rye to Rievaulx, where we may well imagine that he was a welcome guest, and not the less so when he stated the purpose of his visit. The result of it was that Aelred decided that Waltheof might quit Kirkham. He did not, however, claim him for Rievaulx, else his decision might appear interested. The two friends probably thought it would be too great happiness to be together in the same monastery. So the matter was compromised by Waltheof's flying away from his priory to the abbey of Wardon, in Bedfordshire, which was a colony from Rievaulx, and also founded by William d'Espec.

Waltheof sought the cloister of Wardon to obtain peace, but instead of finding what he wanted, he only raised about his head a storm on which he had not cal-

culated. First, the canons of Kirkham did their best to recall him ; they even had recourse to ecclesiastical tribunals to force him to return ; but they were unable to effect their purpose. After this, however, a greater trial awaited him. He had also placed himself very nearly within the limits of his brother's earldom. Now Simon by no means appreciated Waltheof's love of humiliation. On the contrary, he considered it a dishonour to the noble blood of the old kings of Northumberland that a scion of their stock should be a novice in a poor Cistercian monastery. A mitred abbacy he would not have quarrelled with, but that his brother should be the lowest monk in a low convent was intolerable ; and he sent a message to the brethren of Wardon that he would burn the abbey over their heads if they allowed his brother to remain amongst them. The poor monks trembled, for they well knew Simon was a man to keep his word, and amidst the general license of the period, burning an abbey was not so very rare as to make it remarkable. Waltheof, therefore, was again a fugitive, cast out on the wide world by his own mother's son. But our Lord has promised to give us an hundred fold that which we give up for His sake ; and so when Waltheof's own brother turned against him, Aelred, who was more to him than his unnatural brother, was given back to him. The monks of Wardon, when they found themselves obliged to send their novice away, transferred him to Rievaulx, where he was out of the reach of his brother.

Henceforth Waltheof's external trials are over ; yet our Lord, who never will leave His Saints to be without the cross, now prepared for him an interior trial, which was harder to bear than any other. Hitherto he had walked in the light of God's countenance in spiritual

joy ; but now the countenance of the Lord no longer shone upon him, and there had succeeded a cold and dreary state of darkness, in which he seemed to have lost sight of the object of his faith. He felt neither joy nor sorrow ; he had no feeling at all. When he thought on the Passion, he did not weep ; and when he meditated on the Resurrection, there was the same dull blank in his soul. Formerly, fasts and vigils, and bodily suffering of all sorts, were a joy to him, because they were a means of partaking in the crucifixion of his Lord ; but now all the various actions of his monastic life were gone through mechanically, as a daily task. The doctrines of the Mirror of Charity were exactly suited to his case ; but, as generally happens in such temptations, he fancied that his state had something peculiar in it, which exactly excepted it from the consolations which Aelred held out. He thought that he had done wrong in leaving his priory, and he was sorely tempted to quit the Cistercian order before he finally took the vows. The devil, who knows well that obedience and patience are the proper means of escaping, in God's own time, from such spiritual depression as then weighed down his heart, was anxious to make him by a definite act break away from Rievaux, and take the law in his own hands. But it is best to give the whole in Josceline's words :—" When Waltheof had spent some time in the cell of the novices, by a temptation of the Evil one, the observance of the rule became loathsome to him ; the food appeared to him tasteless, the clothing rough and vile, the manual labour hard, the psalms and night-watches wearisome, the whole course of the order too austere. When he thought on the former years which he had spent as a prior, it grew upon him that the rule of the canons, though less austere, was more in accordance with Christian discre-

tion, and more fit for the saving of souls. As soon, however, as he felt this suggestion creep into his heart, he sought, in constant and earnest prayer, an antidote for its poison. After, however, the temptation, far from diminishing, had only increased, so that he debated whether he should quit the Cistercian order and go back to his canons, he was at length relieved by the Lord, and blushed at his own weakness. For, one day after the bell had sounded for the office, at one of the canonical hours, and all the novices had gone out in seemly order, he alone remained behind in the cell. Led by the impulse of the Spirit, he threw himself across the threshold, half in and half out of the cell, and praying, with many tears, he said, ‘O God Almighty, Creator of all, who knowest and dispensest all things, whether it be thy good pleasure that I remain a monk, or that I become again a canon, shew me, O Lord; and take away from me this temptation which afflicts my soul.’ And our Lord heard his prayer, and soon, almost without feeling, the mourner felt ‘the dull hard stone within him’ disappear. He never knew what happened to him in that hour, or how it happened, but he felt himself raised off the ground, and found himself in the seat which belonged to him in the cell, and where he used to read and meditate. Nothing can express so well what he then felt as the words of an English poet, whom we have almost unconsciously quoted:—

These are thy wonders, hourly wrought,
Thou Lord of time and thought,
Lifting and lowering souls at will,
Crowding a world of good or ill
Into a moment’s vision; even as light
Mounts o’er a cloudy ridge, and all is bright,
From west to east, one thrilling ray
Turning a wintry world to May.

Waltheof never felt the temptation after this; and in due course, at the end of the year, he received the white habit at the hands of Aelred. Great must have been the joy of both in that hour when Aelred put the habit upon his friend with the usual words, "The Lord put off thee the old man with his deeds," and the convent responded, "Amen."

4. How Waltheof became an Abbot.

Waltheof and Aelred had been, as it were, drifted together for a little time, probably that Waltheof might be strengthened for the work which was now before him. This was the reason that the temptation above-mentioned was sent to him, according to brother Joscelyn. "By a wondrous providence," he says, "our God, in His wondrous mercy, permitted him whom He destined for the government of souls to be tried by this temptation, for the increase of his crown, and that by his own experience he might have compassion on others." And he proceeds to tell us what was this government of souls. In the year 1147, the monks of Melrose elected him their Abbot, and sent to Rievaulx to beg of Aelred to give him permission to accept the office. Again, therefore, the two friends were separated, though not for ever, for the abbot of Rievaulx was the regular visitor of the community of Melrose. It was Waltheof's lot to win back all his old friends in the course of his life; after many years, he now found again his step-father king David, and his brother prince Henry. How his whole former life must have rushed upon him as he re-crossed the border, after so many years of monastic trials! His life, as a courtier in Scotland, must have

appeared a very point in his existence, and the adventure of the ring and the lady at that distance almost ludicrous. When he reached his abbey, he found himself lord of an extensive domain ; for though the abbot of Melrose was not the mitred prelate that he afterwards became, yet the whole countryside was in his hands. The people had been all but converted by St. Cuthbert, as prior of the monastery ; and king David had endowed the community with extensive lands, so that the abbot of Melrose, by a double title, was spiritual and temporal lord of a large part of Tweeddale. Waltheof found his abbey in a delicate state. Richard, the first abbot of New Melrose, had just been deposed for harsh conduct towards the monks ; the new abbot had, therefore, to recover the authority lost by his predecessor, without irritating the brethren, who, of course, were exceedingly sensitive to any exertion of discipline on the part of their spiritual ruler.

As Melrose was, in point of fact, a new abbey, this state of things might have ruined it. The abbey had seen strange vicissitudes : first, it had come under St. Columban's rule,⁹ with all its minute and severe penances, and its uncompromising severity. It seems hard to say precisely when it became Benedictine, for the rules of

⁹ Mr. Michelet thinks that St. Columban's rule differed from that of St. Benedict, in that it was mystical to such an extent as to make light of the grossest sins of the flesh. If he had construed the passage on which he founds his opinion, he would have seen that it has no reference to actual guilt, but was a provision to exclude the very suspicion of it. *Si quis monachus dormierit in una domo cum muliere, duos dies in pane et aqua.* What he translates, *S'il ignorait que ce fut une faute,* means *Si nescierit mulierem esse in domo.* It would be invidious to point out a blunder however gross in so long and so able a history, if so monstrous a conclusion had not been founded upon it. —*Histoire de France*, tom. i. 277.

St. Columban and of St. Benedict were not so far opposed to each other that they were incapable of existing side by side. Some communities observed both together, till at length St. Benedict's rule got the day, as being the wisest legislation for monks, considering the average capabilities of man. While St. Columban's monks fasted every day till evening, St. Benedict varied the hour at different times of the year. Again, there is a special provision for difference of climate in the Benedictine habit, which is not the case in that of St. Columban. On the whole, the Benedictine rule was found on experience the better. It was framed in that mild Italian spirit which was needed to temper the fierceness of our northern blood; and probably the rejection of the Scottish usages about Easter, and the Benedictine rule, came hand in hand into Melrose. Certainly St. Cuthbert, who was himself a convert from the Scottish mode of keeping Easter, was also the first to introduce St. Benedict's rule into Lindisfarne. This is bringing the matter very near Melrose, and seems to point to him as the person under whom the abbey first became Benedictine. In the time of Waltheof's predecessor it underwent another change, for king David had made it Cistercian, and put it under the jurisdiction of Rievaulx. The convent seems to have been entirely removed from its old spot, for, about half a mile from the present ruins of the abbey, is a place which tradition assigns as the site of old Melrose, on a promontory, stretching so far into the Tweed that the waters all but convert it into an island. The convent did not at first flourish in its new locality, owing to the harshness of abbot Richard, and perhaps to the impatience of the community under their new rule. The monks were very anxious to get rid of their abbot,

but they were afraid to take any steps to get him deposed, as he was an intimate friend of the king. At last, they hit upon the expedient of electing Waltheof in his room. This effectually disarmed David's anger, and Waltheof was joyfully welcomed by him back to his dominions.

Waltheof thus found himself again a man in authority. During the rest of his life he was now to be everything for other people, and nothing for himself. Of the many years which he spent at Melrose but little is known ; how they passed, however, we may judge by the kind of idea which was still preserved of him in the abbey at the time when Josceline wrote his life. Every tradition points to the paternal kindness and sweetness of his rule. The old monks still told of him, that when a monk, who had fallen into a grievous fault, had once confessed it publicly and done penance, he would always punish severely any one who reproached the offender, or made any allusion to his fault. "Often he had in his mouth," says Josceline, "that saying of the blessed Hugh of Cluny, 'If either happened to me, I would rather be punished for showing too much mercy, than for too much severity.' In the secret of the confessional, he showed himself so mild and soothing a physician, that, however stubborn was the breast of the sinner, the droppings of his words of holy consolation would soften it to a true and fruitful penitence ; and, by smiting it with the rod of the Lord's Cross, he would cleave the hard rock, till it burst forth into a fount of tears ; and then, when he saw him weep, tears of compassion used to flow from his eyes." A tradition still remained of the beauty of his countenance ; and it was said that, notwithstanding his austerities, his face had still a delicate colour in the midst of its paleness.

Besides this, the earnestness of his preaching was remembered, as well as his eloquent and lucid speech, whether he spoke in French, English, or Latin, of all which languages he was perfect master. With these qualities and acquirements, it is not wonderful that he should be said to have gained an immediate influence on all who came in his way, by his persuasive words and kindness of manner. And this overflowing love extended itself even to animals. Stories were told of his affection for the old grey horse which he constantly rode, and which he used playfully to call his brother Grizzle.¹ He was even known to punish himself severely with the discipline used in the order for having killed an insect, saying that he had taken away the life of a creature of God, which he could not restore.

It was, however, not only within the walls of the abbey that his kindness of heart was known. The abbot of Melrose, as head of the Cistercian order in Scotland, was not a man who could always remain within the cloisters of his monastery. He had to go up into the Highlands as far as Elgin to found the abbey of Kinloss; and at another time down among the Cumberland hills, to lead a colony from Melrose to Holmcultram. In his time, too, an abbey was projected by his half-brother, Prince Henry, and the site was fixed upon near the town of Cupar-angus, not far from the banks of the river Isla; it was not, however, put into execution till the time of his successor. His greatest sphere of action was in the wild country around Melrose itself. The abbot's grey horse and his truly apostolic retinue were well known in the valley of the Tweed, and among the many winding glens, which each sends its tributary stream into the broad river, along

¹ Frater Ferrandus, v. Ducange in voc.

the banks of which lay the possessions of the abbey. This was the very ground which had witnessed St. Cuthbert's labours before he was made bishop of Lindisfarne, and the Saint had never a worthier successor than abbot Waltheof. His retinue was not of the kind which brother Josceline regrets was becoming in fashion among the Cistercian abbots of his time. They could not sleep, he says, for a night in a grange of the abbey without a train of servants and numerous sumpter-horses with pack-saddles containing mantles of the finest cloth, lined with lamb's-wool. His train consisted of a monk and a lay-brother, with three boys to look after the horses. The abbot was so little solicitous about his personal appearance, and travelled with so little luggage himself, that he used to ride with the boots and other apparel of his attendants slung on in front, to save them the trouble of carrying them.

He was, however, not the less beloved by the vassals of the abbey because he travelled about in the guise of a poor man. Melrose was the regular refuge of the whole countryside, in the midst of the many physical sufferings which came upon the peasantry in those hard times. Sometimes grievous famines came upon the land, and the whole population from a great distance round used to assemble about the abbey. It required faith to undertake to feed these multitudes, and God rewarded the faith of the abbot, by working miracles to enable him to do what he had undertaken. At one time, it is said, a sore distress afflicted the country, and no one knew what to do. It was yet three months to the harvest, and the last year's provision was all spent. The corn was still green in the valleys and on the hill-sides; and what was to be done in the meanwhile, before autumn came? Melrose was the only resource, and so all trooped off to

the Tweed side with their wives and children, and thronged the abbey gates. It was hardly possible that the granaries of the monks could supply them; but at least it would be better to die under the abbey walls, where the brethren would administer the rites of the church to the dying, than to lie down and perish in detachments in their lonely glens. A vast crowd, therefore, collected together, and, as it were, besieged the gates of Melrose. Waltheof went out with Thomas the cellarer and some of the brethren to learn how large was the multitude. He found that they had regularly encamped about the abbey, under the trees of the many woods, and on the level grounds by the side of the Tweed, for two miles around; four thousand men were said to be assembled on the spot. Waltheof turned to Thomas, and asked him how this number of men were to be nourished till the autumn. Thomas was called in the country the good cellarer, on account of his kindness to the poor; he said that the numerous flocks and herds of the abbey might be slain to feed them; but, he added, all the corn of the abbey was consumed except what remained in the two granges of Gattonside and Eildon. The abbot, on hearing this, took his crosier in his hand and crossed the Tweed to Gattonside, then a grange belonging to the abbey, now a village smiling amongst its orchards opposite to Melrose. He then went into the granary, and striking his crosier into the corn, knelt down and prayed with many tears. He remained a long time on his knees, and, when he rose, he made the sign of the cross, and went away; he also proceeded to an upland farm called the Eildon grange, and did the same thing there; then he turned to Thomas and said, "Now disperse boldly, and give to the poor and to ourselves, for God will give the increase, and multiply enough for the use of both."

The monk did so, and the abbot's faith was rewarded, for the granaries of the two granges lasted out the three months which intervened to the harvest.

It was not, however, only among the poor of the land that Waltheof obtained influence ; his noble birth, and his brother's high station, made him a conspicuous character ; and whenever the business of the abbey for a moment brought him in contact with his lofty kindred, the contrast between his poverty and the station to which he was born acted as a practical homily in a place where the voice of religion was seldom heard. He once had occasion to go to king Stephen, who, as well as the king of Scotland, was his kinsman. This meeting with Stephen took place in the open air, and he found him standing with Simon, the earl of Northampton, his own brother. The abbot had not altered his apparel or increased the number of his attendants, though he was going into the king's presence. He appeared as usual on his old grey horse, with the boots of the grooms slung on before him instead of costly trappings ; and altogether he was a very uncouth figure to appear among the nobles, who were round the king, dressed in their burnished armour, it could not be denied. His brother felt ashamed of him as he approached, and said : " See, my lord king, how my brother and thy kinsman does honour to his lineage." Stephen fixed his eyes on the abbot, and said with his usual oath " By God's birth, if thou and I had only the grace to see it, he is an honour to us ; he is an ornament to our race, even as the gem adorns the gold in which it is set." Then he came forward and kissed the abbot's hand, and asked for his blessing, and bent his head to receive it. He granted Waltheof all that he wanted, and took leave of him. After he was gone, Stephen remembered his own troubled life, how he had

to fight for his crown, and how little it profited him. He was a merciful prince, and of much good feeling, and was affected by this encounter. He was no friend to churchmen, on bad terms with the Pope and with both English archbishops ; but his religious feelings were roused, and he burst into tears, and said, " This man has put all worldly things under his feet, but we are in chase after this fleeting world, and are losing body and soul in the pursuit." Such was the effect of the sight of Waltheof on Stephen ; his prayers for his brother had a more lasting result, though he had to wait long to see the fruit of them. Simon listened at last to his brother's exhortations, and repented sincerely of his irregular life. He founded the abbey of St. Andrew at Northampton, in which house St. Thomas afterwards took refuge, as well as a nunnery dedicated to St. Mary without the same town, and the Cistercian abbey of Saltrey, dependent on the house of Wardon.

The favour of God was manifested to Waltheof in other ways besides this answer to his prayers. Our blessed Lord rewarded the crucified soul of His servant with a foretaste of those joys which He will give to His blessed ones in heaven. Sometimes, at long intervals, when the abbot was keeping his Christmas or Easter festival in the church at Melrose, Christ was pleased to manifest Himself to His Saint in visions, one of which we will give in the words of Josceline :—" Once when on Easter-night he celebrated the vigil, and the convent was chaunting psalms and hymns, the Saint saw in the Spirit the whole course of the Lord's Passion, as though it were going on before his eyes. It seemed to him that he saw the Lord, after the scourging and mocking, bearing the crown of thorns upon His head, crucified on the tree, His hands and feet distended by

the nails. He thought that he saw Him giving up the ghost, and commending His soul into the hands of the Father, and afterwards pouring forth from His pierced side blood and water, to be our bath and our chalice, the price and the reward of man's salvation. He looked upon His soul, separated from the body, spoiling hell, and, followed by a numberless multitude of souls, coming out from the pit, resuming the body, bringing joy to the Angels by His resurrection, and by His appearance prostrating the soldiers, who were set to watch lest the Life should arise from the dead. Then in a vision he saw Him beautiful, in His robes of glory, going forth in the greatness of His strength, bringing into paradise the spoils of captivity."

5. How Waltheof was taken to his rest.

This was the way in which the Lord recompensed him for the austerities with which he crucified his flesh, for his intense devotion, and for the many nights spent on the cold stones in the church, after the brethren had retired to rest, when compline was over. But He further rewarded him, by taking him to his rest from the cares of the world, and by calling him away while he was still at Melrose in the midst of his monks.

Waltheof had been many years abbot of Melrose, and there seemed but little likelihood of his being disturbed by attempts to remove him. He was, however, to have another trial before he died. In the year 1159, when St. Aelred happened to be at Melrose, the brethren were one day surprised to see a large and glittering cavalcade approach the abbey: it was composed partly of ecclesiastics, partly of men whose dress and bearing showed

them to be of high rank. They proved to be several of the canons, accompanied by the great men of the realm, come to offer Waltheof the vacant bishopric of St. Andrew's. The abbot, as they had expected, refused the see ; but they had recourse to St. Aelred, as his superior, to force him to accept it. The Saint enjoined him on his obedience to accept it. Waltheof, however, begged his friend to hear him in private ; and, when they were together, he informed him that God had revealed to him that he had now not long to remain in the world, and that the charge was too much for one who was soon to sicken and die. St. Aelred looked mournfully at his friend, and saw that, from his emaciated features and wasted frame, death could never be looked upon as unlikely : but he would not believe the message which Waltheof gave him ; he shut his eyes to the notion that his friend was to go to his rest before him, and leave him alone upon earth ; he therefore persisted in his command. Then they returned together to the chapter-house, where the assembly was anxiously waiting for their return. All were glad to hear St. Aelred's decision ; but Waltheof stood up and said, "I have put off my old garment, how should I put it on again ? I have washed my feet clean, how should I stain them again with the dust of the world's business ?" Then he added, solemnly, with the tone and manner of a prophet, "Believe me, ye will elect another man, and have him for your bishop." Then he pointed with his finger to a stone in the pavement of the chapter-house, and said, "There is the place of my rest ; here will be my habitation, among my children, as long as the Lord wills." All who were present saw that he was resolved, and the assembly retired, saying that they would let the matter rest for a time.

Waltheof was right ; soon after this he was taken violently ill ; his body was racked with pains. About the time of the dog-days, says Josceline, he grew very much worse, and all men thought that he must die at once. Nevertheless he lived for three weeks after this in dreadful pain of body, but perfectly collected in mind, so that in the intervals of his agonies he used to call the brethren around him, and exhort them to love and concord amongst each other, and charity to the poor. During the last nine days he seemed to be dying every moment, and the attendants wondered how it was possible that a frame so exhausted and so racked with pain could hold together. Then it was remembered that he had been used to pray that in his last sickness he might suffer pain as a penance for his sins, so that his life seemed to be prolonged in these fiery pains, in answer to his own prayers. As soon as a fit of pain had passed away and a short breathing time was allowed him, he would smile faintly, and lift up his hands, as if to thank God. Once he said to those about him, “ Oh ! if I could but speak, I could tell you of wondrous things which I have seen.” It is probable that God, who had so often favoured him with visions, now deigned to console him with a foretaste of heavenly joys, even while he was lying in agony. On Lammas-day, when the Church celebrates the memory of St. Peter’s miraculous delivery from prison, he was so visibly dying that he received the Body and Blood of Christ and the rite of extreme Unction. Yet for two days and two nights he lay in pain, hourly expecting death, and yet kept alive to suffer. About the dawn of day on the 3rd of August, the convent was summoned to be present at the death of their father, and he was placed on sackcloth to die, according to the rule of the order. When he heard the low chaunt of the psalms and litanies around him, he

opened his eyes and looked round upon them as if to thank them. He seemed so much revived that they retired ; once again this scene had been renewed, when after sext, as the convent was sitting down to its mid-day meal, they were summoned for the last time. " There," says Josceline, " with the chaunts of his brethren sounding about him, this holy soul, after being tried as in a fiery furnace with fevers and manifold pains, and purified as gold in the fire, quitted the mortal tabernacle of its spotless body. Thus did the holy father pass from the world to the Father, from faith to sight, from hope to joy, from the shadow to the reality, from darkness to light, from the toilsome race to the hard-won crown, from the misery of this present life to the everlasting glory of a life never to pass away."

Thirteen years after the death of the Saint, the stone under which his body lay, in the very place which he had pointed out, was raised by abbot Josceline, and his remains were found uncorrupt. Again the same thing was found forty-eight years after his death. Many miracles were done at his tomb, which now lies neglected and unknown among the ruins of his abbey. A stone indeed is pointed out by tradition in the choir, to which his remains may have been translated. Nothing, however, certain is known, except that his body will rise gloriously in the resurrection of the just.

THE LIFE OF

St. Robert.¹

WHAT is meant by the word obedience, as applied to our blessed Lord, we cannot tell, still less can we conceive how, in consequence of His humiliation, He could be exalted. All that we know is, that for us He bowed Himself down to the death of the cross, in obedience to the will of the Father ; and that for our sakes He, in His human nature, was received up into glory, though His everlasting glory could neither grow nor decrease. His glory is represented as being the reward of His voluntary sufferings ; and yet, incomprehensible as it is, this is not a mere representation, but both the glory and the sufferings are real. And this, again, is the case with all members of His Church ; as His merits are imparted to them not by a nominal imputation, but by a real and ineffable union, so also the cross which they bear is not figurative, but a very crucifixion of body and soul. In proportion, too, as Christians are more saintly,

¹ This life of St. Robert is principally taken from a manuscript life of him in the British Museum, which contains a few particulars not in the Bollandists. It speaks of having heard things spoken of him by the old men in the Abbey, and also of a book preserved there called *Collectaneus Sti. Roberti*, containing his meditations and prayers, and also of the book of his miracles. Many miraculous stories are told of him in the life in the Bollandists.

that is, more Christian, they also partake more of the cross. They are not content with the narrow bounds of natural suffering, but they seek out for themselves, as it were, a supernatural cross, that they may learn to live above the flesh and to crucify it with their Lord. It is this inseparable connection between glory and suffering which makes the most contemplative Saints to be also the most austere. It is this which has driven holy monks and hermits into the wilderness; they durst not, without crucifying their bodies, give themselves up to the holy joys into which their love for Christ threw them, when they contemplated His mysteries. "There is no Thabor without Calvary," as it has been expressed; and "this is a fundamental law of Christian mysticism."

The first Cistercians were no exceptions to this rule, which is, in fact, the principle which gave life to all monastic orders, and which connects together ascetics in all ages, St. Anthony and St. Bruno, St. Benedict and St. Romuald. On the low, vine-clad plains of Burgundy St. Bernard renewed what St. Basil had begun in the solitudes of Pontus. In the wild forests and on the lonely mountains of the north of England the same scenes appeared as in the first ages were witnessed in the deserts of Egypt. And this was especially the case with the first generation of English Cistercians; from peculiar circumstances, they were distinguished by sterner features than those of France. There is little enough of sternness in the idea which we form of St. Bernard writing his sermons on the Canticles in the arbour of twisted flowers,² in the garden of Clairvaux; or in St. Basil's description of his solitude, and of the

² *Pisatiis floribus intextum. Vita Sti. Bern.*

clear river sweeping round his woody mountains which collected its waters into a clear basin like a lake, and then again narrowed into a river. But our first English Cistercians had little leisure for scenery. The colony sent to Rievaulx came over from France and found a home ready for them ; but the first monks who broke away from a Benedictine abbey, as St. Stephen did from Molesme, had to endure a trial which it required superhuman energy to bear. Their history forms the principal portion of the very brief life of Robert of Newminster which remains to us.

Few, indeed, are the particulars which are related of him, except as far as he is connected with Fountains Abbey. He was born in the district of Craven, apparently at the village of Gargrave.³ He went to the university of Paris, and his biographer appeals to a book on the Psalms, which he is said to have composed, as a proof of his progress in theology. He then was ordained priest to his native village of Gargrave. He next appears as a monk at Whitby. In the year 1132, however, news reached the monastery of a movement in the Benedictine order, which entirely altered Robert's plan of life ; and we must transport the reader into the chapter-house of St. Mary's abbey at York, that he may see how the voice from Citeaux found an echo in England.

The abbey was rich and magnificent, but any one who entered it soon perceived that St. Benedict would hardly have known it for his. It was not that the monks were men of scandalous lives. "On the con-

³ Ex provincia Eboracensi quæ Craven dicitur. Gargrave ubi natus fuerat. MS. The Church of St. Andrew of Gargrave was given in 1321 to the Abbey of Sallay by William Percy. Vide Dugdale.

trary," says the chronicle of Fountains, "they lived honestly, but they fell far short of the perfection enjoined by the rule." The abbot was a kind-hearted man, but he was old and ignorant, and the monks led an easy life. A noise of chattering and laughing might be heard all over the abbey ; some, indeed, kept aloof, and would go into the church to pray while others were idle. The greater part, after compline, instead of going to the dormitory, walked about, and, dividing into knots, talked about the news of the day. Thus there were two parties in the community ; but the strict party were a very small minority, only thirteen monks. However, they had at their head Richard, the prior, and Gervase, the sub-prior, so they hoped that something might be done through them ; and, on the eve of the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, he went, with the sub-prior, to Godfrey, the abbot, and propounded to him his thoughts as to the lax state of the abbey. But the poor abbot trembled at the very notion of innovation. He said that the convent would have an ill name, that all the world lived as they lived, and that he did not see why they should affect singularity ; in fine, it was impossible. Richard, however, stood his ground manfully ; as for innovation, it was only going back to the rule of St. Benedict ; and, as for impossibility, the monks of Clairvaux and Citeaux found it possible enough. The abbot put off his decision, and begged him to put down in writing what he wanted. By the time, however, that this was done, the other monks had heard of what was rumoured ; "and," says the chronicle, "there arose a great tumult in the monastery." Richard, seeing that the case was hopeless, applied to Thurstan, archbishop of York, saying that they were threatened

with excommunication by their brethren. They protested that all that they wanted was "to follow Christ, who was a poor man, in His voluntary poverty, and to bear Christ's cross on their bodies." The archbishop applied to abbot Godfrey; and the old abbot wept, and said that he would not oppose their holy resolution, but could do nothing without the chapter. So the archbishop promised to meet the chapter.

On the appointed day, Thurstan, with several grave and reverend ecclesiastics connected with the cathedral, went to St. Mary's abbey, to try to pacify it. When, however, they reached as far as the door of the chapterhouse, they were met by the abbot, who protested that the archbishop alone should enter, without the secular clerks who attended him. When Thurstan remonstrated, out rushed from the chapterhouse the whole convent, and with them a number of strange monks, Cluniacs and Benedictines, assembled for the occasion. Such an uproar ensued as St. Mary's abbey has never witnessed before or since. They roared, they bellowed, and they declared that they would rather suffer an interdict for an hundred years than yield an inch. Suddenly they shouted, "Seize them, seize them!" and then they attacked Richard and his friends, and would have torn them to pieces, if they had not clasped the archbishop's knees for shelter. Then they drove archbishop, monks, and clerks, altogether, pell-mell into the church, with cries of "Seize the rebels! seize the traitors!" So the archbishop quitted the monastery, and took with him the brethren thus forcibly ejected, being twelve priests and one sub-deacon, and lodged them in his house. Here they remained till Christmas day, when the archbishop took them with him to Ripon minster, and, in the midst of the

solemn services of the festival, he assigned them their habitation, of which they set out to take possession, after having elected Richard for their abbot.

This was what Robert heard at Whitby ; he must also have been told that nothing could equal the desolation of the place or the hardships which, in that rugged season, they endured. We know nothing of the previous workings of his mind, but that this did not deter him is quite clear, for he obtained leave from his abbot to join them, and set out to find their habitation, and a more desolate scene could hardly be imagined. It was on the banks of the Skeld, under a ridge of rocks, and surrounded by pathless woods, then in all the nakedness of winter. And where were the monks themselves ? Under a broad elm, in the midst of the belt of rocks, they had made a hut with hurdles roofed with turf. Here they lived, in the midst of the terrible cold of winter ; their very existence was a miracle, but it was still more wonderful how meditation, and the chaunting of psalms by night, and the regular hours, and the holy sacrifice of the mass, could go on regularly, almost in the open air, to the sound of the wind howling about them through the leafless trees, and of the hoarse roaring of the swollen Skeld. Robert's must have been a resolute heart, not to be appalled by such a scene as this ; but he was supported by his resolution to suffer with Christ, so that the bitter cold, and the long fasts, and coarse food of the little community were a source of joy to him, because they united him to his Lord.

He found the brethren employed in hewing down trees to build a chapel. As for tilling their ground, that was out of the question at that time of the year ; and they were supported solely by supplies which they ob-

tained from the Archbishop of York. It seems wonderful how human bodies could manage to pass the winter in such a solitude, and with so little shelter, but the grace of God supported them. "No sign of sadness," says the chronicle, "was seen among them ; not a sound of murmuring, but all blessed God with entire fervour, poor in worldly goods, but strong in faith." After the winter was over, and the voice of spring was heard in their woods, they determined to send to Clairvaux that they might be affiliated to the Cistercian order. We may suppose with what joy the blessed St. Bernard received the two brethren whom they sent, and wrote to them a letter with his own hand, sending them an aged monk called Godfrey, to teach them Cistercian discipline. According to Godfrey's directions, they built their house, and ordered their whole life according to the institutes of Clairvaux. Very soon the spark which they had kindled spread in England, and ten novices appeared to share their hard life with them. Abbot Richard received them joyfully ; but it was a great act of faith to receive them, for still they had no possessions of their own but what the archbishop of York gave them. For two years they struggled on, sometimes obliged to live on roots and on the leaves of trees, till they almost despaired, and Richard set out for Clairvaux to expose their distress to its holy abbot. St. Bernard assigned them a grange belonging to his abbey, for their support, but Richard on his return found that God had had compassion upon them, and had rewarded their faith by moving the heart of Hugh, the dean of York, to become a novice of the poor house of Fountains, and to give them all his wealth, so that the abbot when he returned, found plenty reigning in his monastery. He found also a library and the books of the Holy Scripture, which Hugh had given them.

Years went on, and the community flourished more and more, till in the fifth year after their foundation, a noble baron, called Ralph de Merlay, offered to endow a Cistercian house if they would send a colony of White monks into his lands. Abbot Richard joyfully assented, and he appointed Robert to be the leader of the twelve brethren of the new house. "It was a beautiful place, pleasant with water, and very fair wood about it," and was called Newminster.

Of Robert's government of his abbey, such scanty records remain that it is impossible to form a connected history of it. As a proof of its flourishing condition, three colonies were sent from his abbey during his lifetime, Pipewell in 1143, Sallay and Roche about 1147. Further than this, only scattered notices are inserted, two of which are here put down, because they help to give a faint idea of the abbot, and because they have never been published elsewhere. One day, Abbot Robert wished to return from a grange, where he had been visiting the lay-brethren of the abbey; a great festival was approaching, and he wished to hurry back to Newminster. He had no palfrey to convey him back, so he called for a pack-horse which used to carry bread to the granges. He mounted his sorry steed, and pulled his cowl over his face, and began to pray and meditate as he was wont to do wherever he went. As he was riding along, he was roused from his meditation by a voice rudely asking him whether he had seen the lord abbot in the place which he had left. This was a nobleman who had come to the abbey on business, and had been directed to seek him at the grange. Seeing this shabby figure, the nobleman thought that it was some lay-brother. Robert did not choose to undeceive him, for he wished still to pass for a poor lay-brother, and so he shrewdly said, "when I

was last at the grange, the abbot was there." But the nobleman when he had looked further at the speaker's features, knew at once from his saintly face that the abbot himself was speaking to him, so he humbly got down from his fine horse, and made the abbot mount it, and when he had finished his business with him, he begged for his blessing and went away.

At another time a great trial befell Robert, one probably more harassing than all his bodily mortifications. He was accused to St. Bernard of misconduct in the government of his abbey, and it appears that the saint so far believed it that Robert was obliged to take a journey into France to clear himself. But when St. Bernard saw him and marked the angelic temper with which the abbot bore the humiliation, without speaking harshly of his accusers, he felt sure that he was innocent, and from that time loved him the more. During this journey he also saw Pope Eugenius,⁴ and returned back to Newminster full of joy, for good had come out of evil ; and it is especially recorded that he did not speak a word of reproach to his accusers when he returned.

It was in 1159 that this saint passed to his rest. He had been to visit his great friend, St. Godric, the holy hermit of Finchale, whom he used to consult in all spiritual matters. It was now fifty years since St. Godric had entered his hermitage ; and though he was lying in extreme weakness on his bed from which he never rose, yet his mind rose above his body, and he was endowed with many supernatural gifts so that he often knew of events which happened a great distance off as though he

⁴ This fixes the date to 1147-8. William Bishop of Durham, who is said in the MS. to have given the lands of Walsingham to the abbey, is William of St. Barbara.

were present. It was a little before the feast of the Lord's Ascension that he quitted St. Godric to hasten back to his monastery, and the holy hermit told him at parting, that he should see his face no more. On the Saturday after the festival, he fell ill, and knew that he was to die. When he had received the Holy Sacrament, and was visibly dying, the older brethren of the monastery came to him, begging of him to name as his successor the man whom he thought most fit. But the saint said, "I know well that ye will not follow my advice, but elect brother Walter," and so indeed it befell after his death. Soon after this he raised his hands to heaven, and prayed for his spiritual sons, and for his monastery, and then he passed away to the joys of heaven on the 7th of June, 1159. At the time that he gave up his soul into the hands of God, a vision appeared to St. Godric, which we will give in the words of the chronicle. "The man of God, Godric, saw while he was praying, an intense light penetrating into the darkness of the night, and two walls of brightness reaching from earth to heaven. Between these walls angels were flying up to heaven, bearing with songs of joy, the soul of abbot Robert, one on the right hand, the other on the left. The soul, as far as it could be seen, was like a globe of fire. As they were ascending, the enemy of the human race met them, but went back in confusion, for he could find nothing to lay hold of in him. And the servant of God saw the soul of his dear friend thus ascend to heaven, of which the gates were opened for him. And, lo ! a voice was heard, repeating twice, 'Enter now, my friends.'"

The body of St. Robert was buried first in the chapter, and afterwards translated to the choir in consequence of the miracles which took place at his tomb.

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